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Premium Publisher Study 2024

How quality content influences the auto purchase journey

Prepared on behalf of: Autovia, Bauer Media

26 June 2024

Agenda

1 /

Audience context

Quality review content shapes the automotive customer journey

2 /

How Premium Publishers influence today's car buyer

Deep-dive into journeys leading to significant actions

3 /

EV vs ICE decision factors

Premium Publishers play key role in directing customer choice

4 /

Summary of findings

Key takeaways from the study and what it means for your brand

Our insight partners

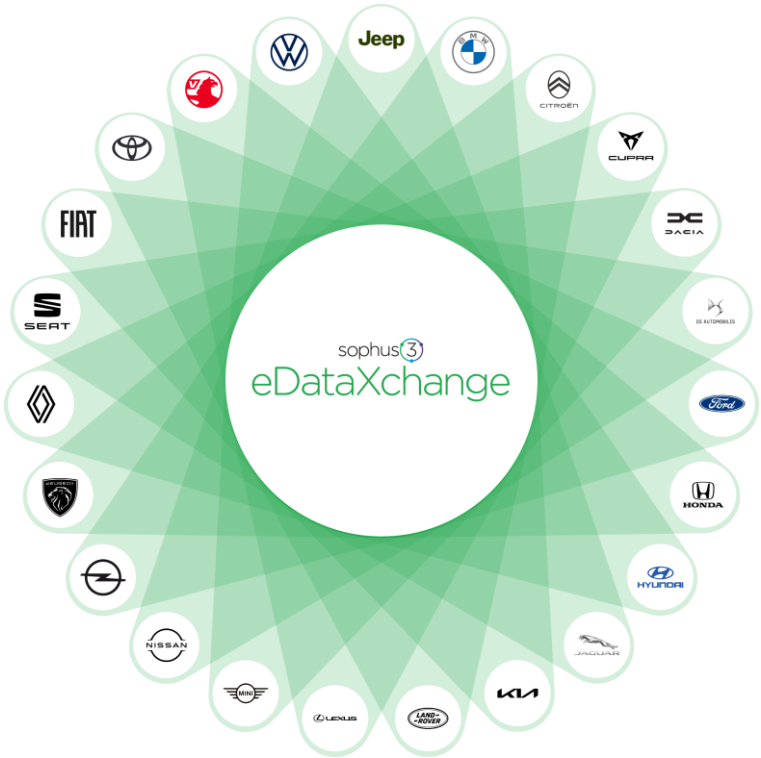
This Sophus3 eDataXchange study was commissioned by the UK's biggest premium publisher brands

PARKERS
FOR THE SMARTER CAR BUYER

car

Auto EXPRESS

carbuyer



Objective: deepen understanding of digital customer relationship

1 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

Understand how the **car buying journey has evolved** with a focus on EV versus non-EV. Highlight opportunities for clients to **improve performance.**

2 RESEARCH SCOPE

Sophus3 has analysed **millions of digital customer interactions** across car brand and Premium Publisher sites to explore the roles of each.

3 CLIENT TAKEAWAY

Provide **actionable insights that deepen the client and media brand relationship** and realise **opportunities of the direct customer relationship.**

UK’s biggest digital user journey study

60
Days of data analysed

17m
Premium Publisher visits

20m
Car brand site visits

452k
Unique customer journeys

90m
Digital interactions

Our customer segments and terminology

We measure visitor intent based on customer actions, then segment visits by customer motivation

In-Journey Audience

Pre-Journey Audience

Auto interested but not active in purchase

Invested

‘Self-directed’ reason for visit that demonstrates clear journey intent

Engaged

High intent, but not yet ready to transact. More engaged than majority of consumers

Ready to Transact

Towards the end of the buying process. Highly engaged and likely to have finalised choice

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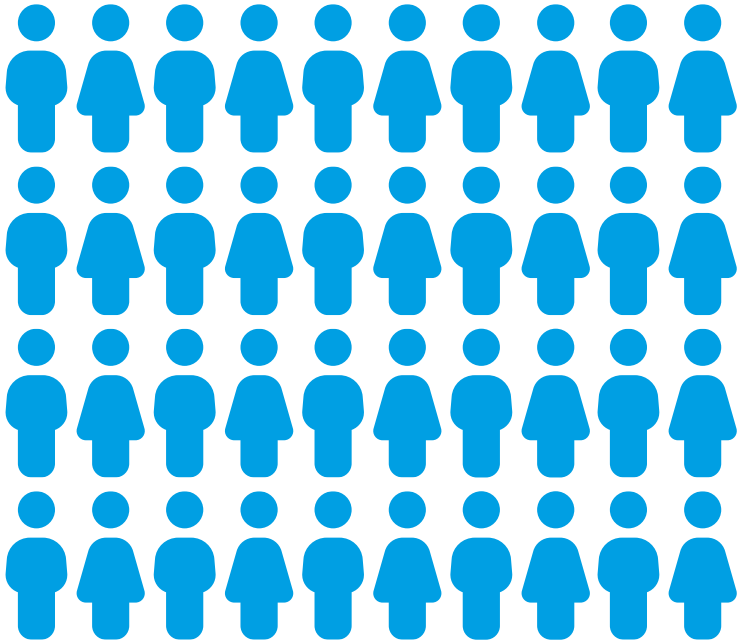
Audience

Quality review content shapes automotive customer journey

One premium publisher generates four times audience of UK car brand

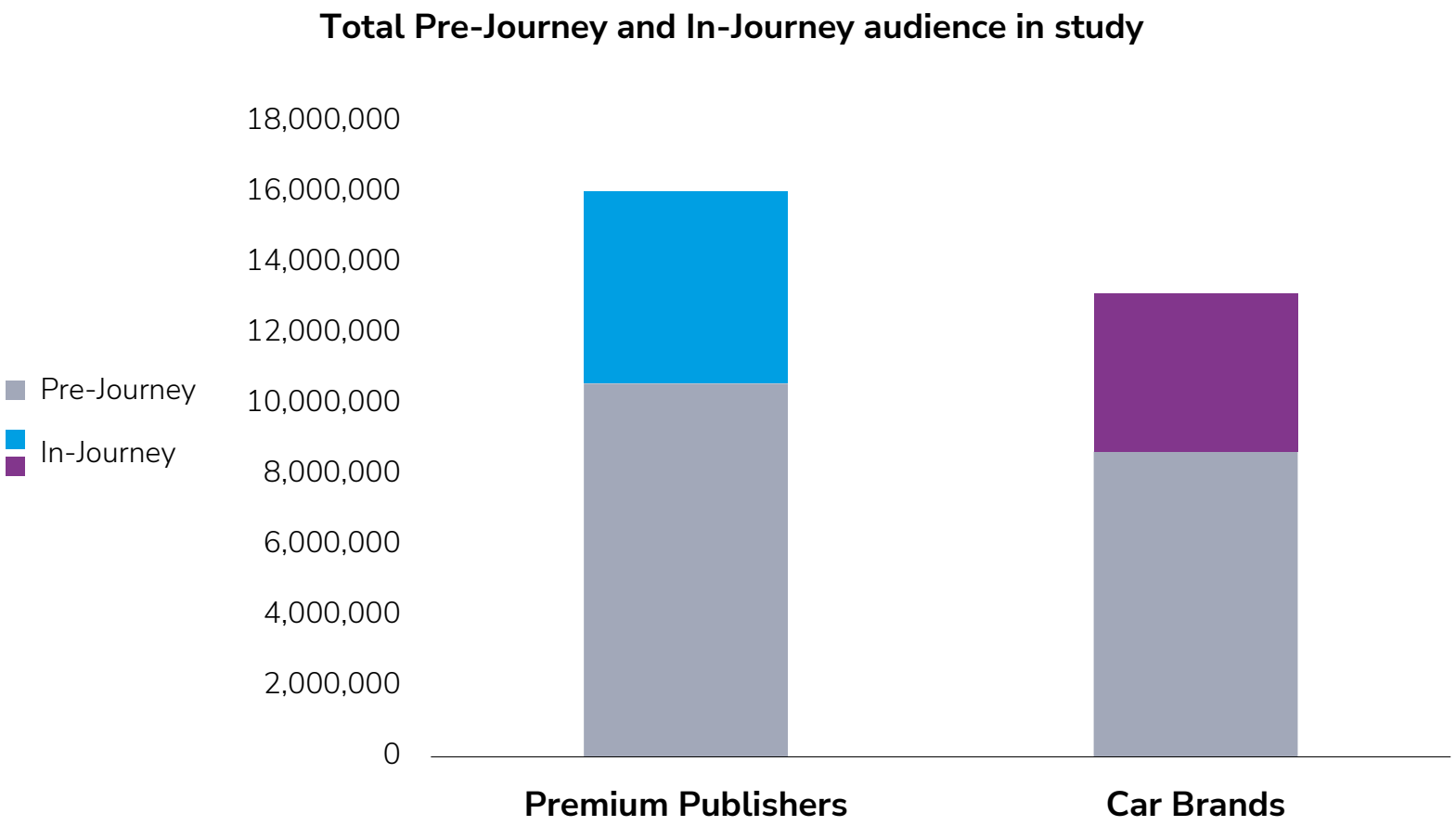
Average Premium Publisher



Average car brand

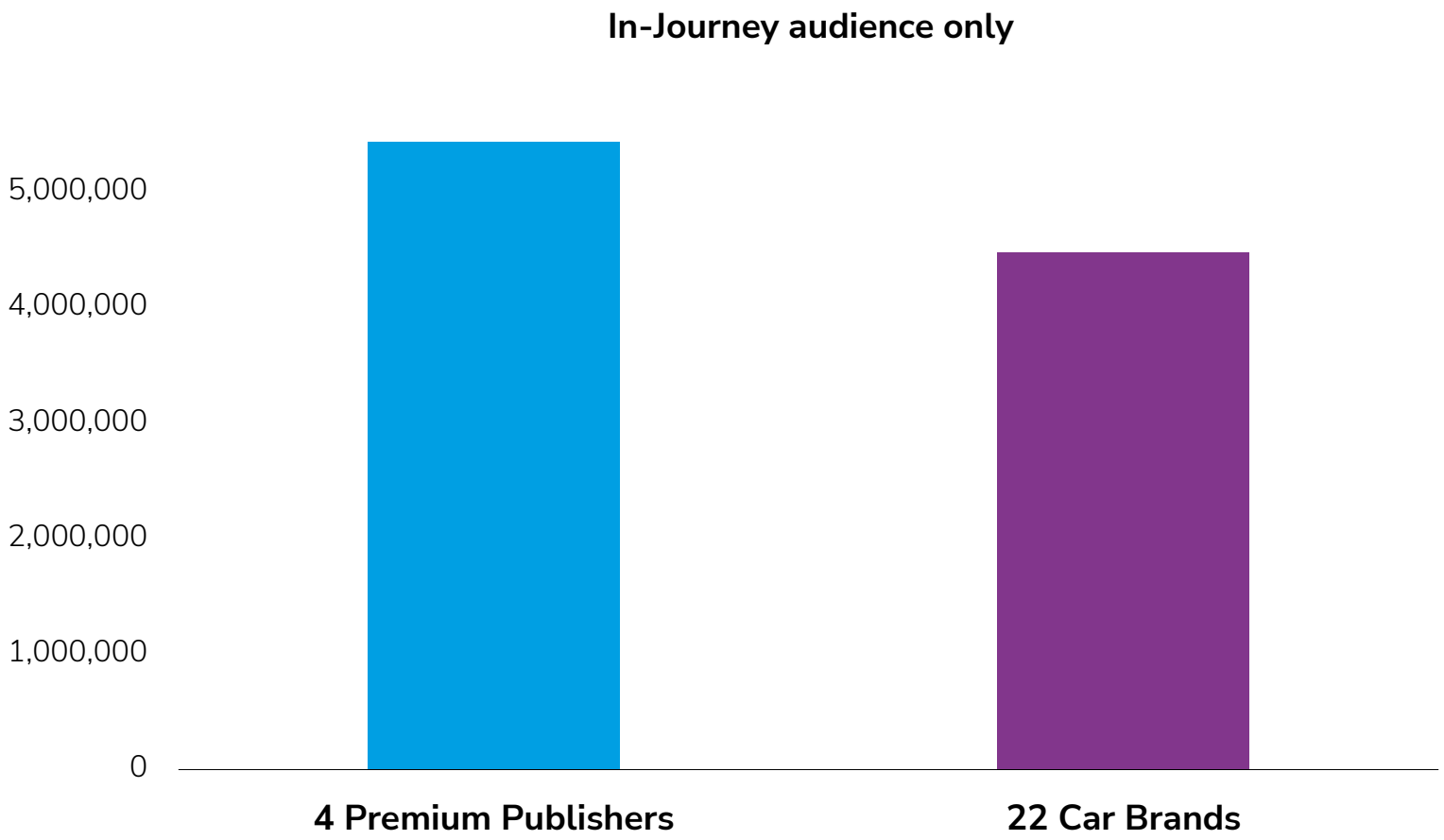
- Average Premium Publisher in our group sees **more than four times the traffic of a car brand**
- Visits per registration **steadily rising** and now stands at more than 150
- Most visits to car brands are driven by paid marketing activity and **conversion rates are low**

Total Premium Publisher auto intender audience 19% higher



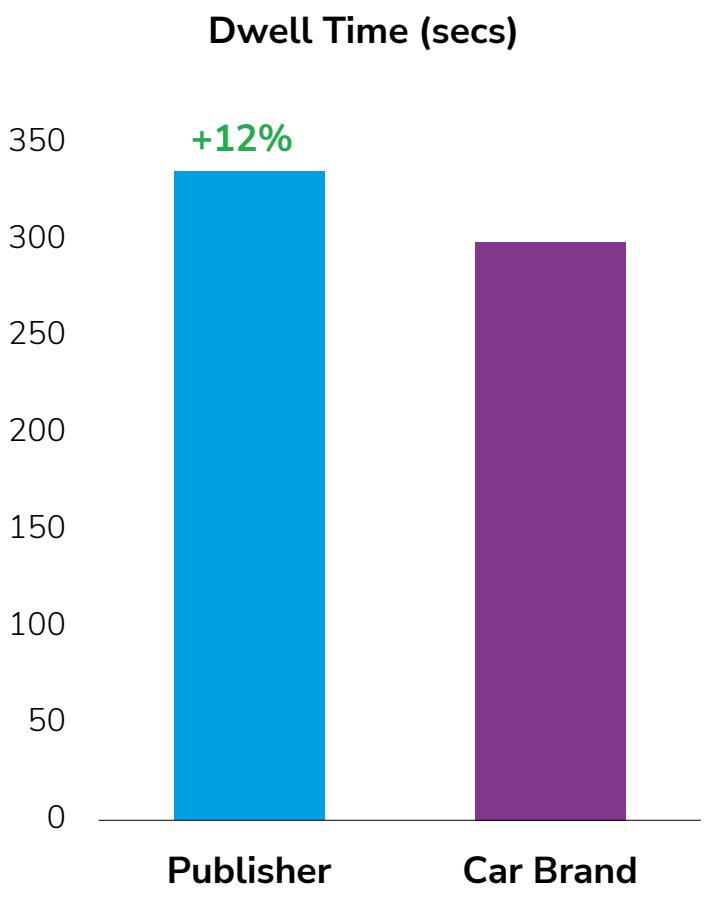
In the 60 days of our study, our group of four UK premium publishers generated more Pre-Journey and In-Journey audience than **all 22 car brands combined**

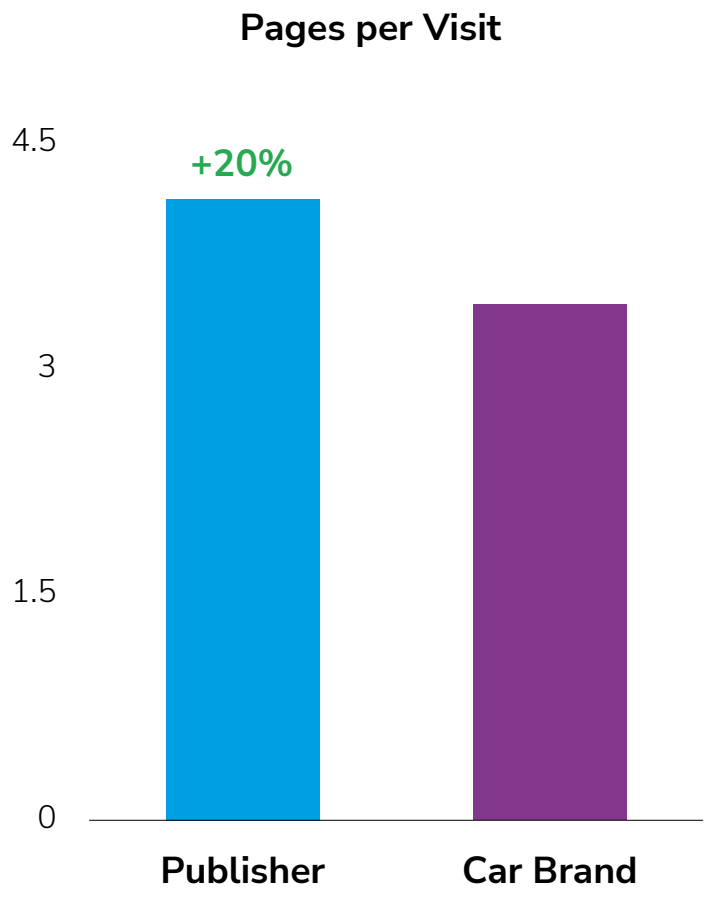
Autovia and Bauer see more In-Journey visits than all car brands combined



- When we consider **In-Journey visits only**, our four publisher sites generated **more than one million** additional visits over UK car brands
- Over the course of a year, this represents an estimated **5m+ additional car buyer visits**

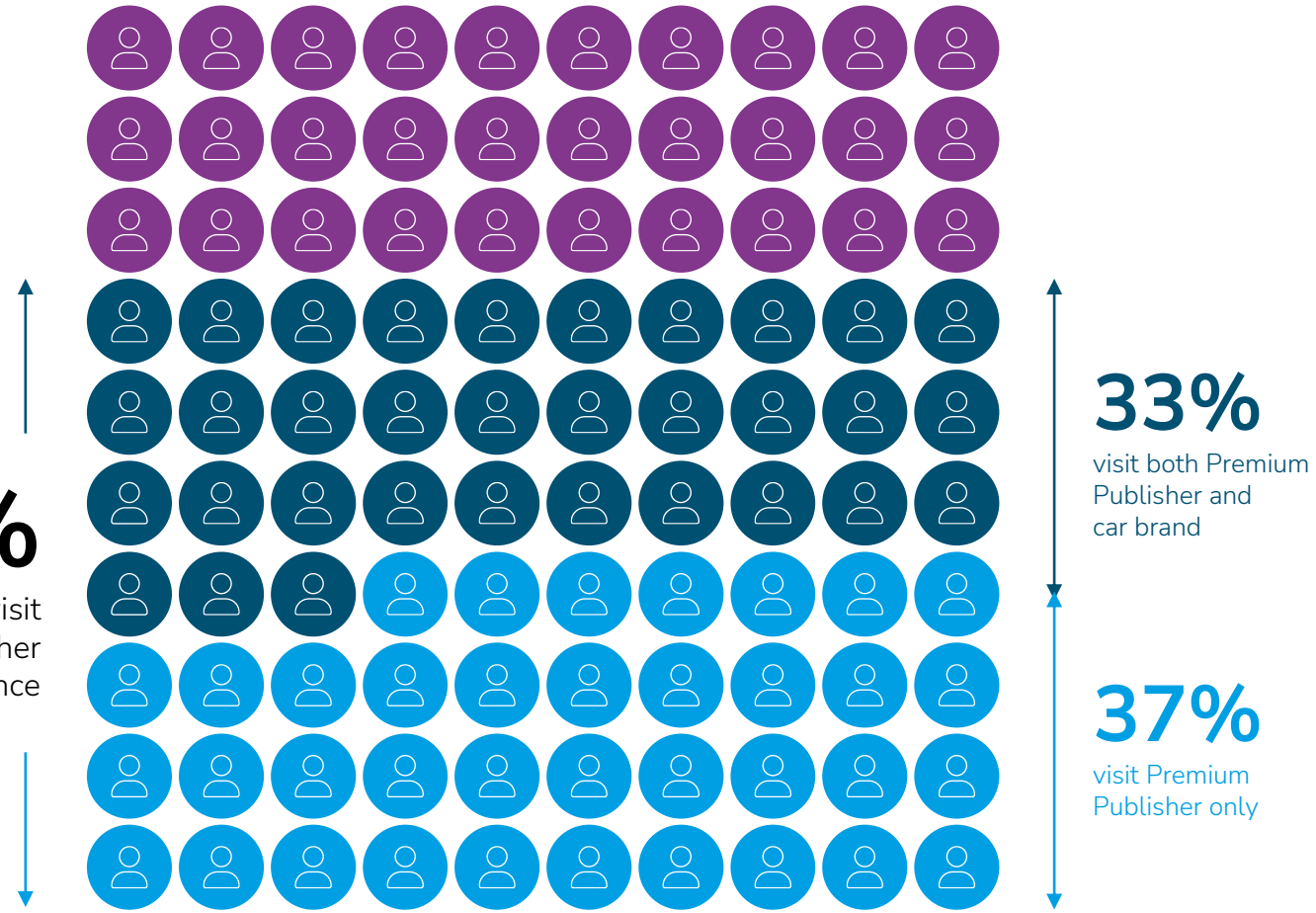
Publisher visits more engaged than those to car brands





- Premium Publisher visitors are **typically more engaged**
- This finding has **not changed in the ten years** we have been working with Premium Publishers
- Pages per visit have **increased slightly** for both Publishers and car brands in that same period.

Publishers influence 70% of all In-Journey visitors in the period



- Although there is substantial overlap between Premium Publisher sites and car brand sites, **more than one third of visits** in our study visited Publisher but not car brand
- We would expect the majority of this group who continue their journey to **go straight to dealer sites**
- Those in this group who go on to transact are therefore **not visible to car brands** despite becoming customers.

Audience

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1/ UK's biggest user journey study based on observed digital behaviour, not surveys

2/ Our group of four premium Publisher brands dominate car brands for Pre-Journey and In-Journey audience

3/ Visits to Premium Publishers are more engaged

4/ Car brands did not see more than one million In-Journey visitors tracked in our study over 60 days

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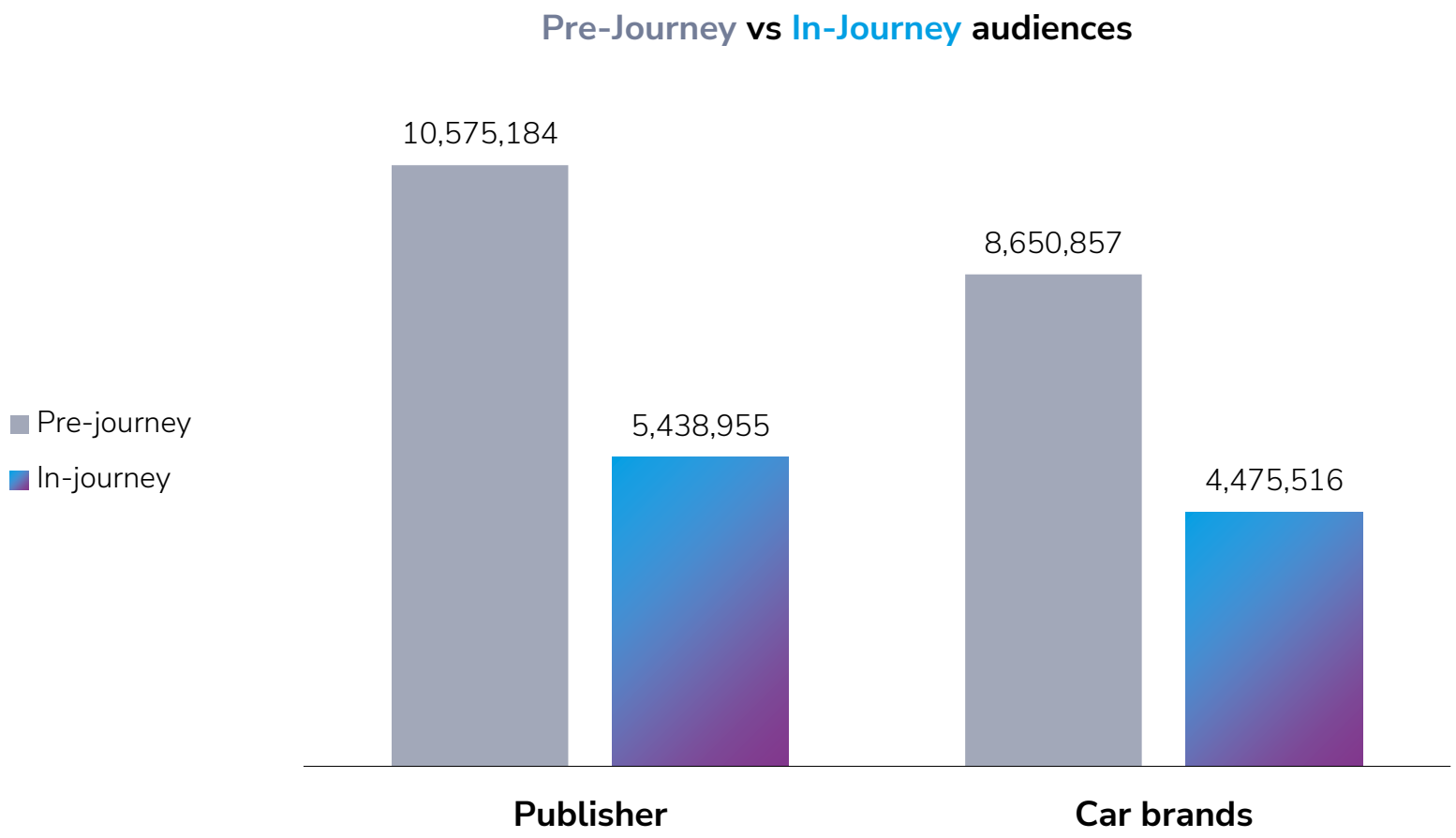
How quality content influences today’s car buyer

Deep-dive into journeys leading to significant intent actions

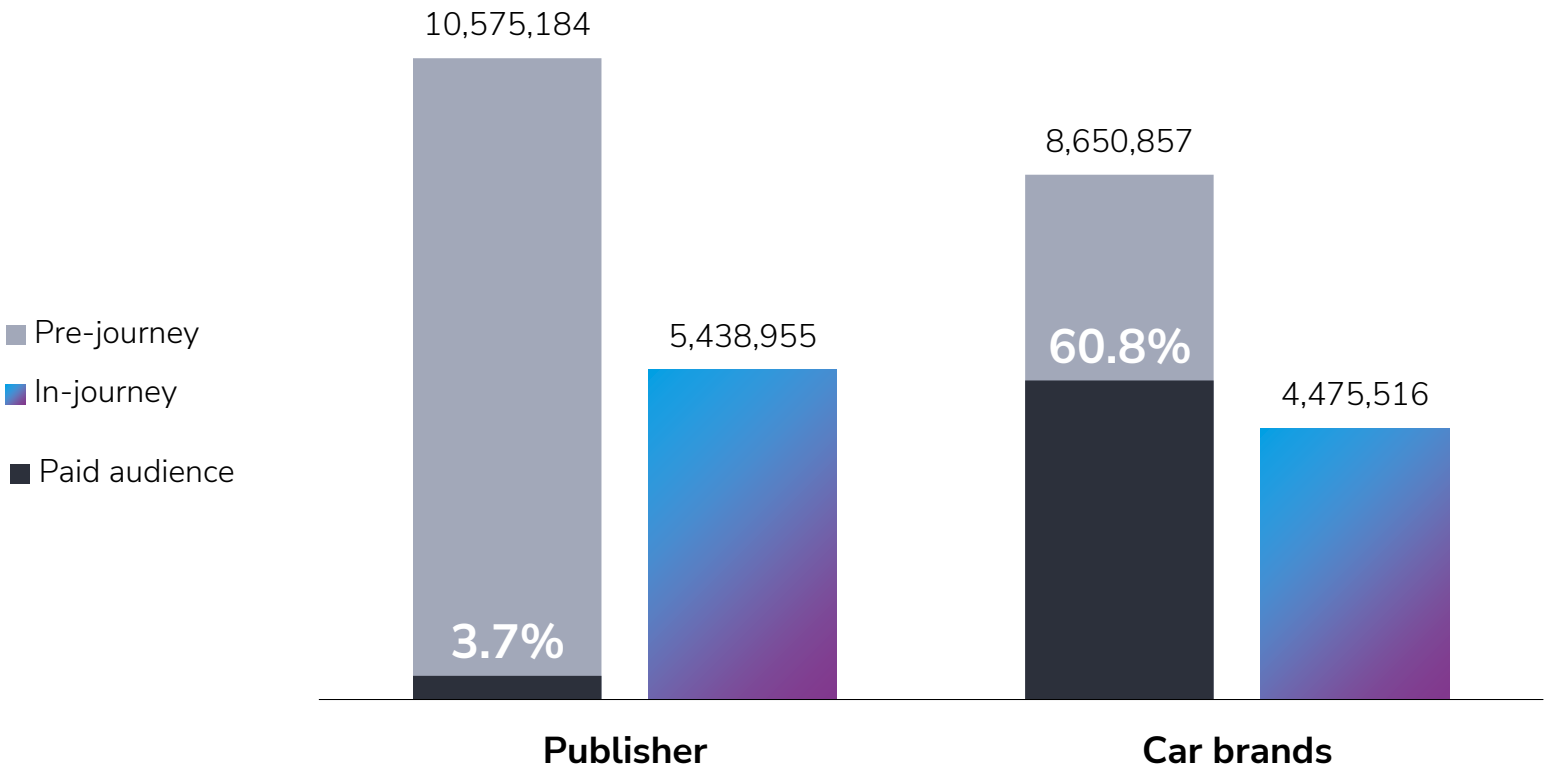
Premium Publishers see more quality visits overall



- **Pre-Journey visits** are defined as 'auto interested' but not yet active in purchase
- Premium Publishers see larger number of both **Pre-Journey** and **In-Journey** audiences
- Definitions do not tell whole story, however

Premium Publisher Pre-Journey visits are also higher quality

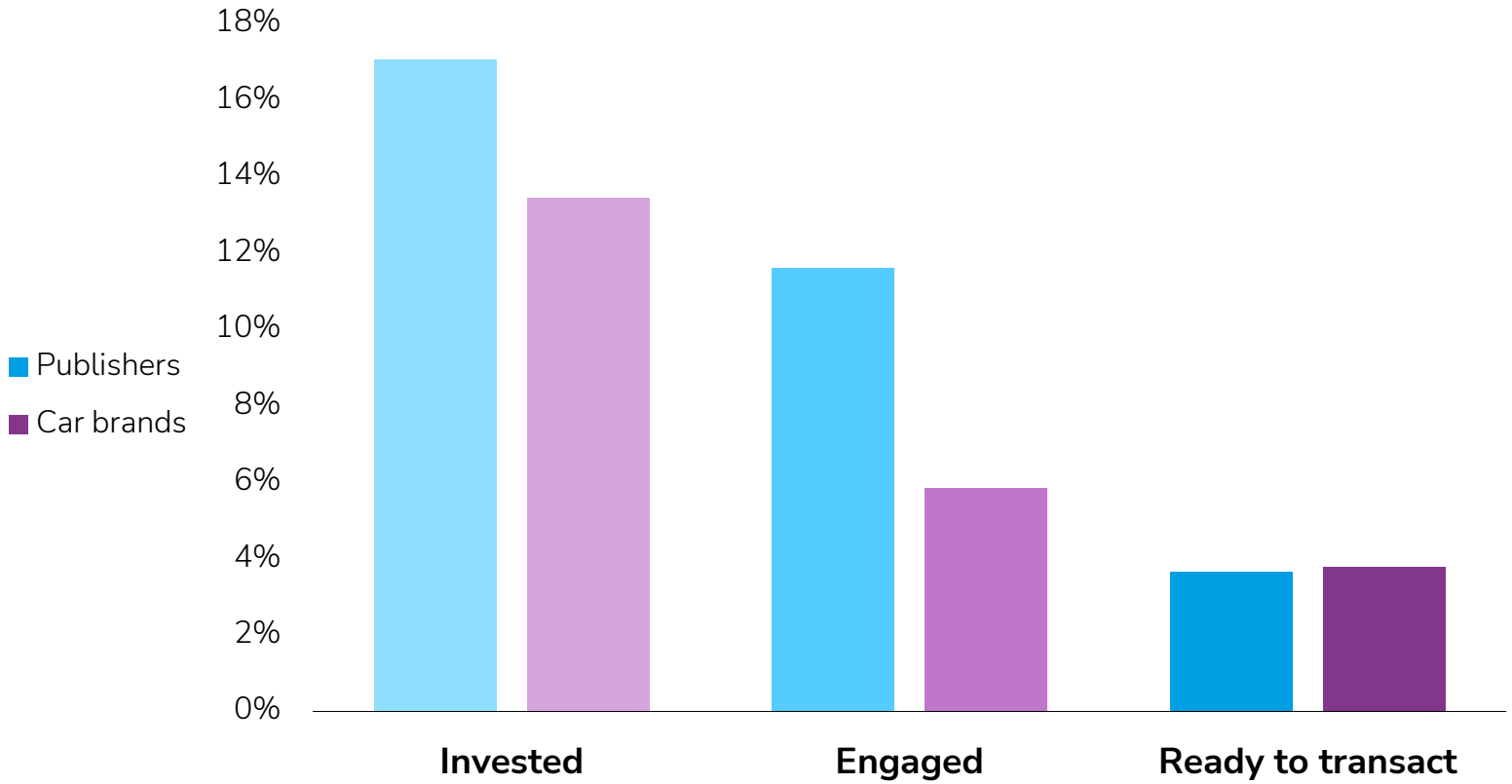
Pre-Journey vs In-Journey audiences



- Sophus3 analysis shows that paid audience has a higher proportion of low-quality traffic than organic audience
- Because Premium Publishers do not spend heavily on search or social media, representing just 3.7% of their traffic, a publisher's **Pre-Journey audience is largely generated by organic search**
- This traffic is shown to be of more consistent quality overall than that of car brands, who generate on average 60% of their audience using paid channels

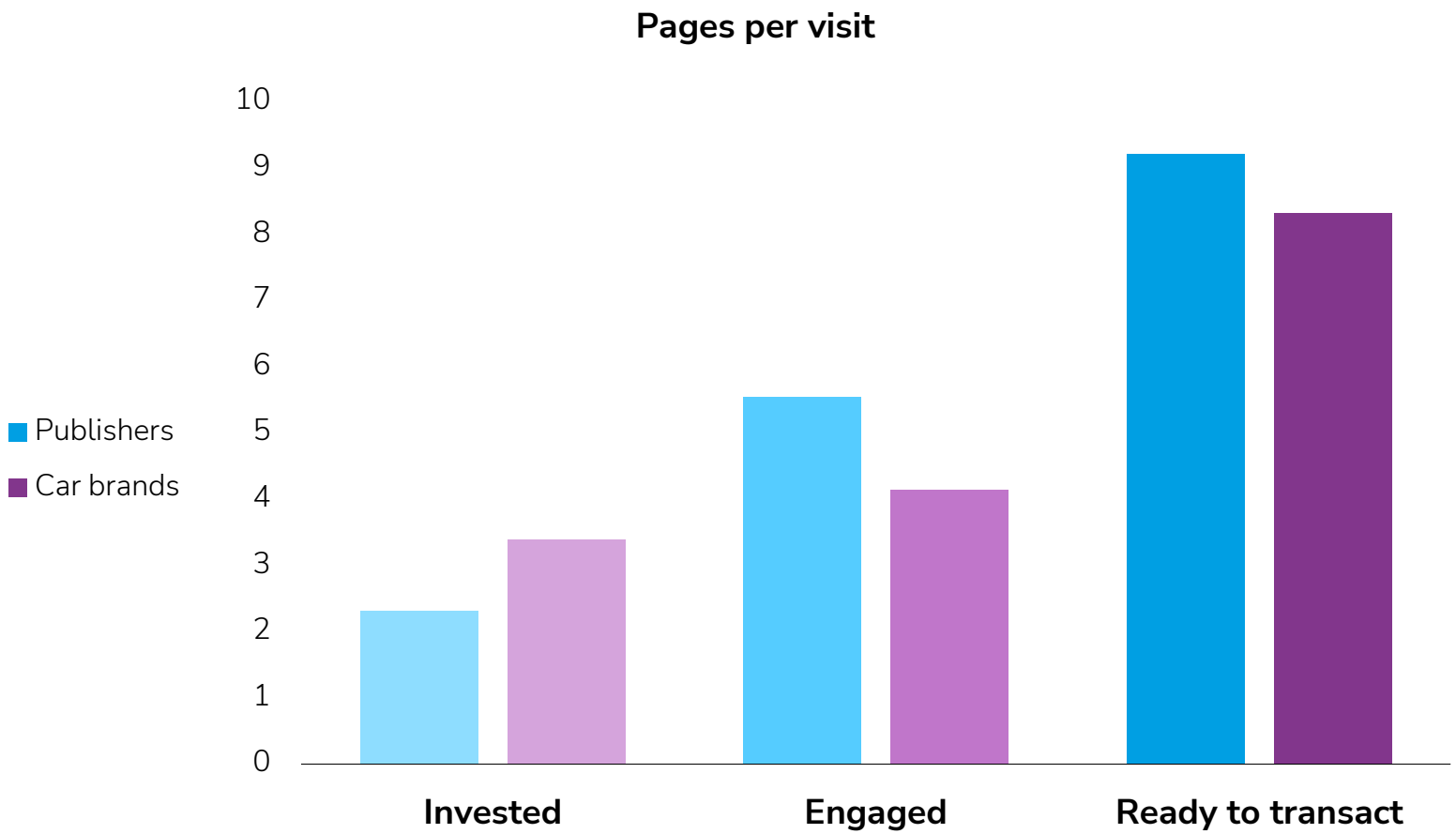
Premium Publisher In-Journey audience also more engaged

How In-Journey audience breaks down



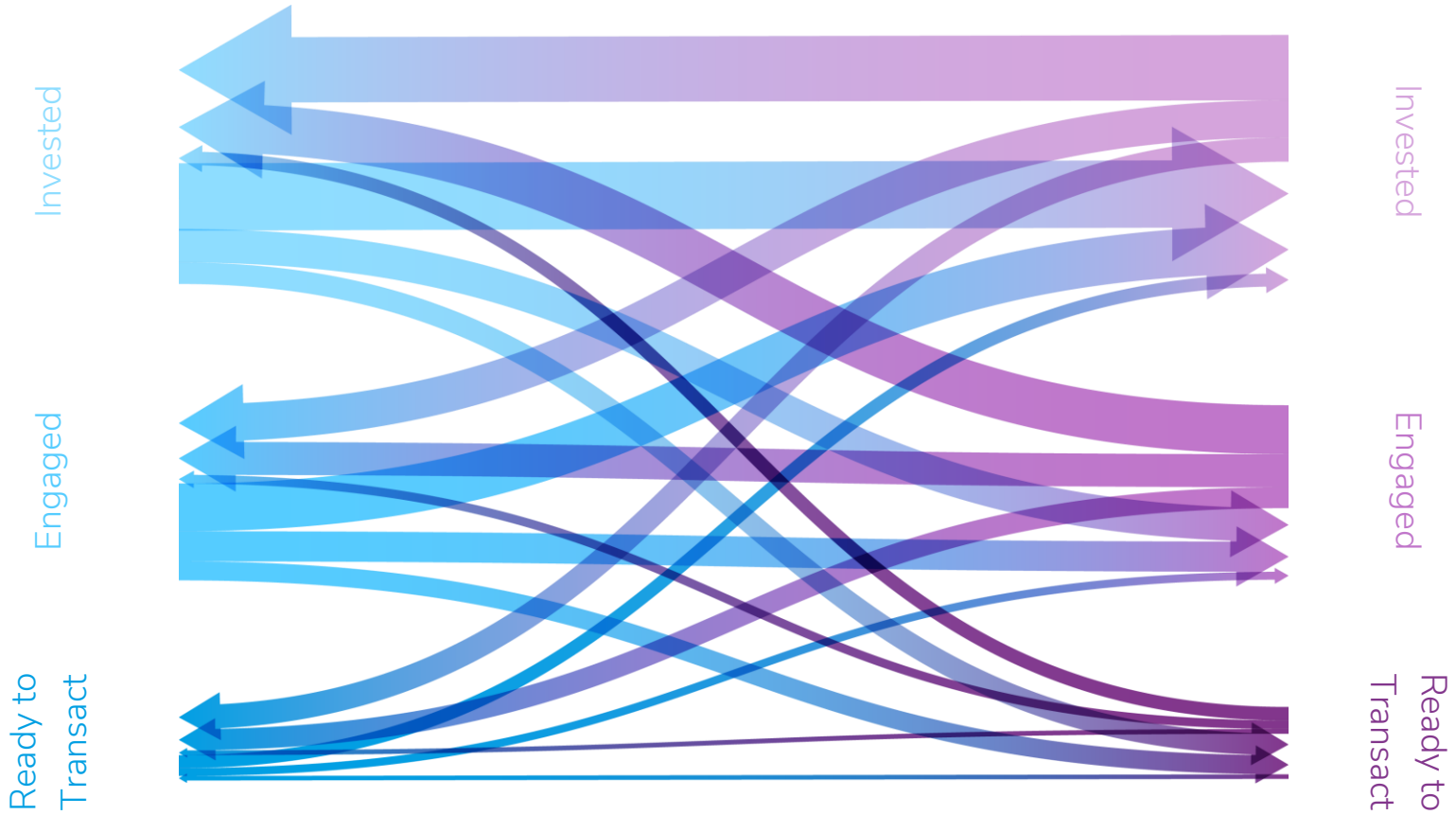
- Premium Publisher **see more traffic across the upper and middle funnel**
- Publisher engaged audience share **nearly double that of car brands**
- Towards the end of the funnel there is a **slight bias towards car brands**, which is when buyers are **ready to transact and seeking model specific tools.**

In-Journey visitors rely on Premium Publisher sites to make decisions



- Lower funnel audiences **engage more** with content on Premium Publisher sites
- High number of pages per visit **more likely to be positive on Premium Publisher sites**, which focus on information
- **Car brands have to juggle information** with sales and marketing
- It is therefore likely that engagement for car brand is **more about validation and spec and less about choice**
- Engagement for **Premium Publishers is likely to be about choice**

Premium Publishers prepare shoppers for final step on car brand site

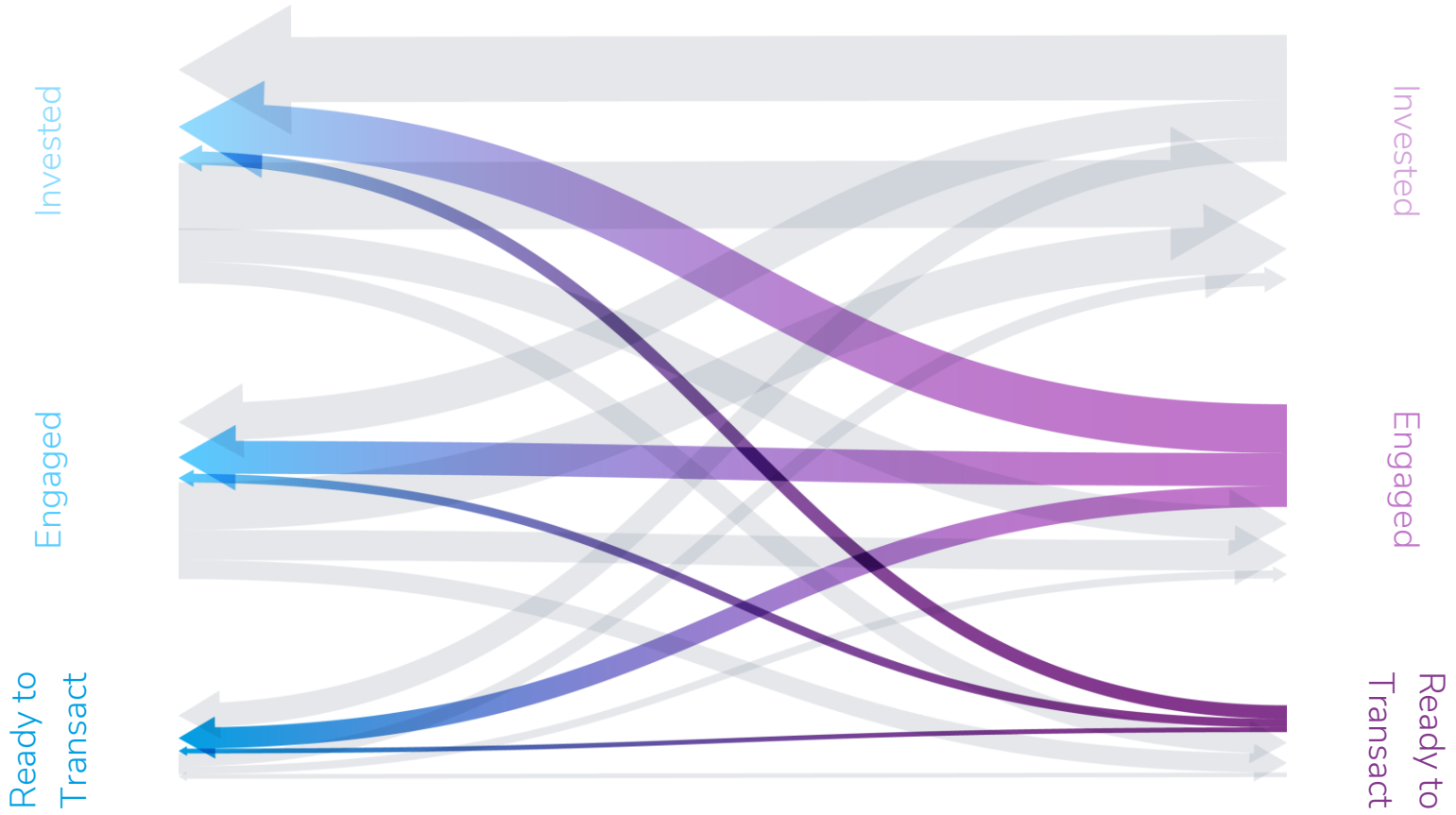


- Heatmap shows areas of high and low density **overlap by audience segments**
- Engaged Premium Publisher audience who are actively in the selection phase **most likely to also visit a car brand**
- As consumers move down the car brand funnel, they are **more likely to interact with publisher content**

Car brands need to remain visible to shoppers who return to Premium Publishers

Premium Publishers

Car Brands



- Where overlap is greatest, **slightly more traffic flows from car brand to Premium Publisher** than the other way around
- Our heatmap shows greatest overlap between **Engaged publisher audience and Ready to Transact car brand audience**
- It suggests that shoppers at the point of decision are **returning to Premium Publishers** for more information before making their choice
- It is important therefore for car brands to **remain visible** on Premium Publisher sites at the later stages of the journey.

Previous Sophus3 study confirms trend

Our previous study in showed a clear link between advertising on Premium Publisher sites and propensity to visit a car brand site.

Car buyer

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1/ Premium Publisher sites attract mainly organic visits, which are likely to be of more consistent quality. Higher engagement on Premium Publisher sites supports this conclusion

2/ Publishers see increased share of In-Journey visits as customers move towards transaction

3/ Customers continue to visit Premium Publishers late into the journey and are more likely to flow from car brand to Publisher site than the other way around

4/ Car brands see more in-journey visits at transaction stage once decision has been made

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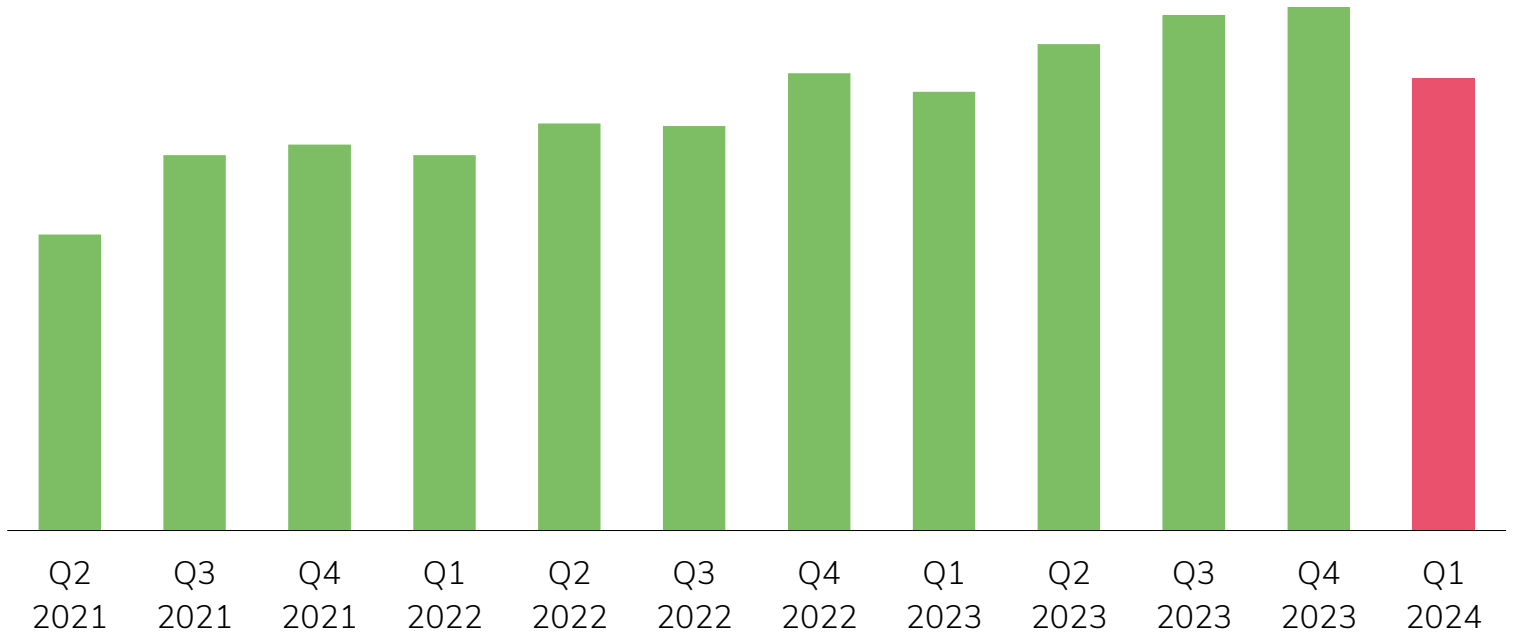
EV buyer journey

How Premium Publishers support adoption of EVs and the EV journey

Context: consumer interest in EVs in reverse for first time since 2021

EV Index reveals slowdown across EU5

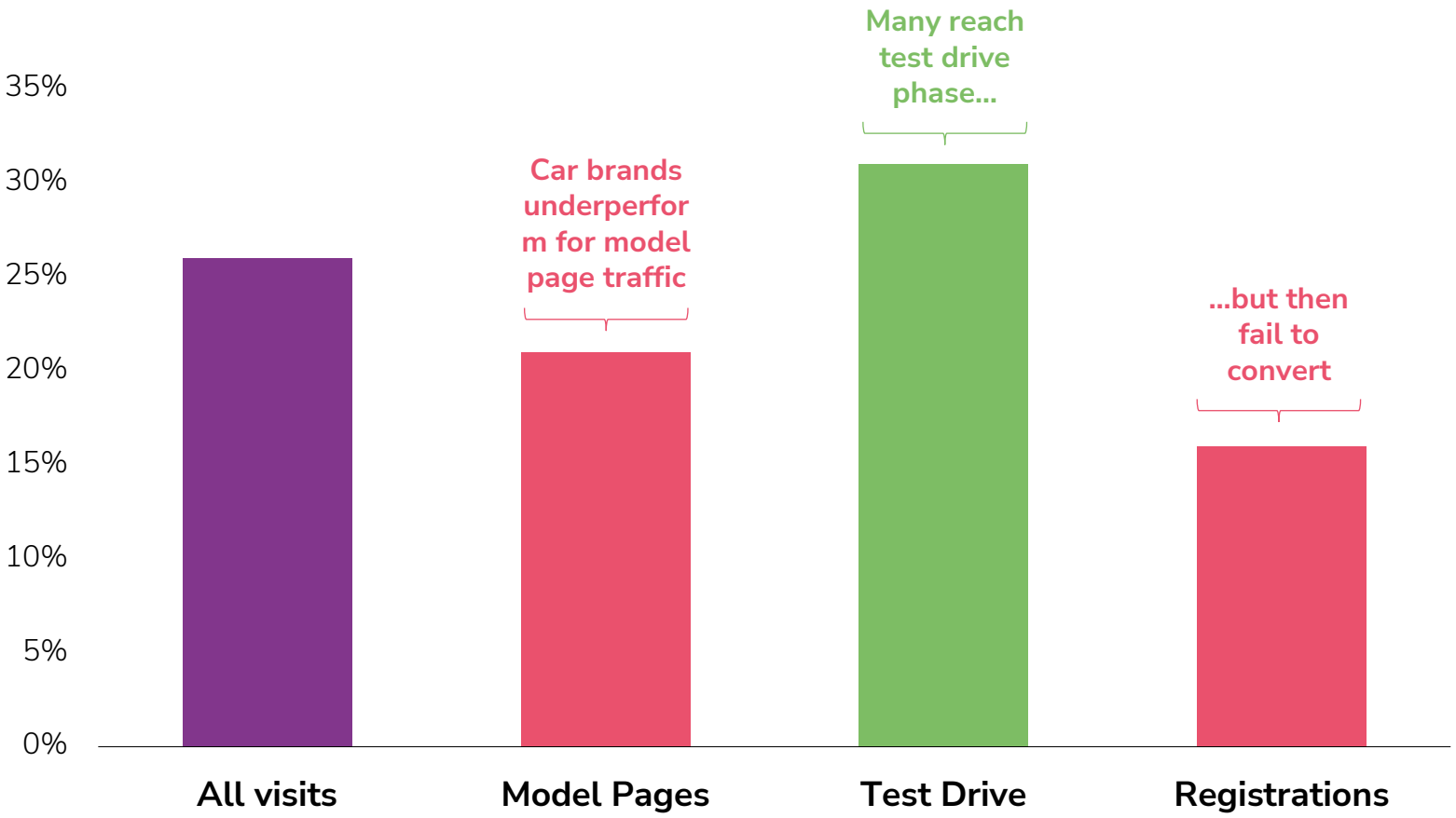


sophus3 EV INDEX

Source: sophus3.com/ev_index

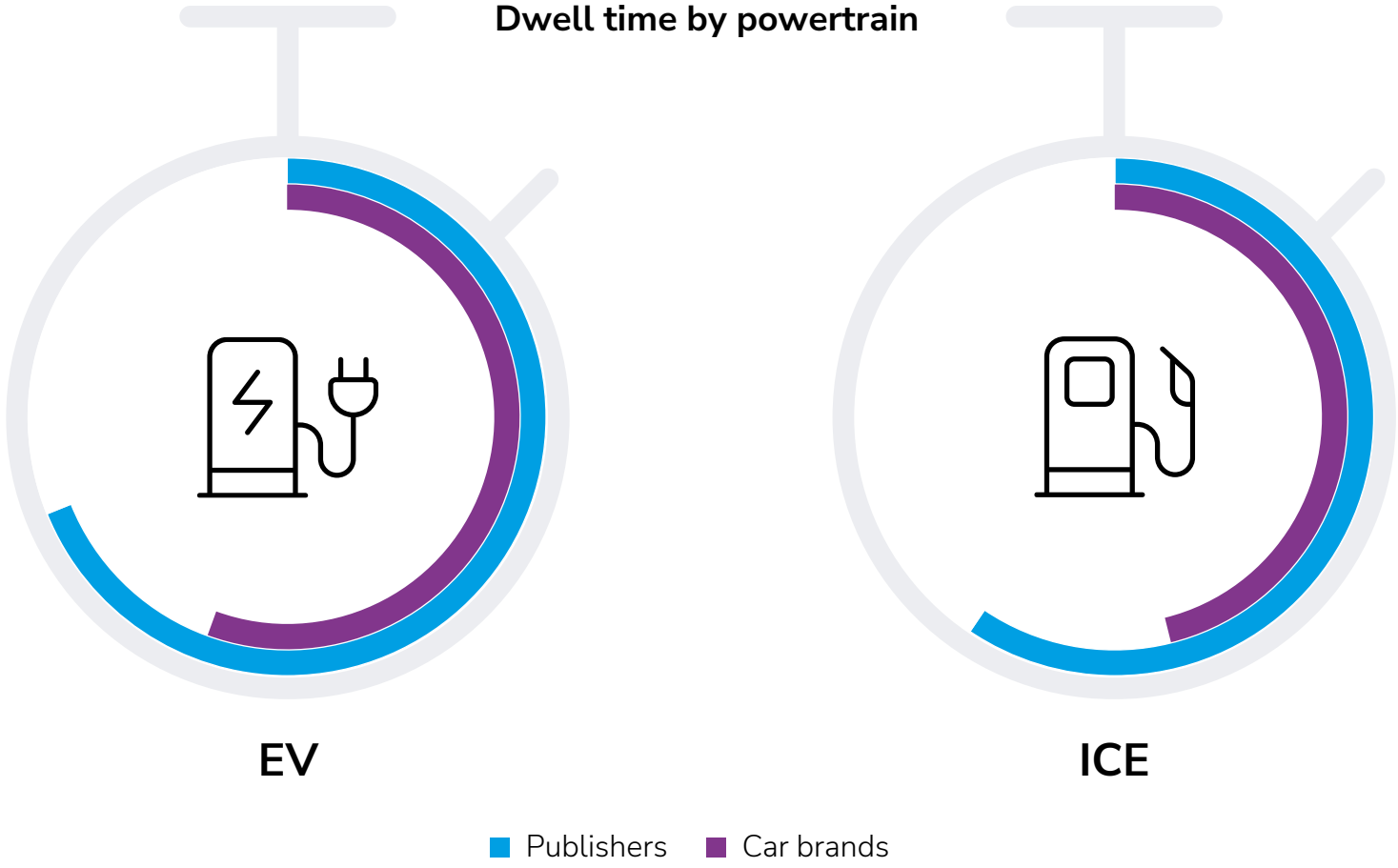
- Sophus3 EV Index uses data from multiple sources to **compare the 'EV readiness' of different countries**, broken down into three pillars: consumer interest; affordability and choice; and infrastructure
- The Index has seen consistent growth since launch in Q2 2021 **but, for the first time, saw decline in Q1 2024**
- It was driven by a **reduction in the digital audience share for EVs** on car brand sites
- **Affordability is also going in the wrong direction,** with some markets (DE, UK, IT) seeing an increase in the price differential between EV and ICE rather than the other way around
- **EV-first countries, such as NO, have not seen this reversal** and their Index trend continues to be positive.

Context: car brands struggle to convert EV visits into the lower funnel



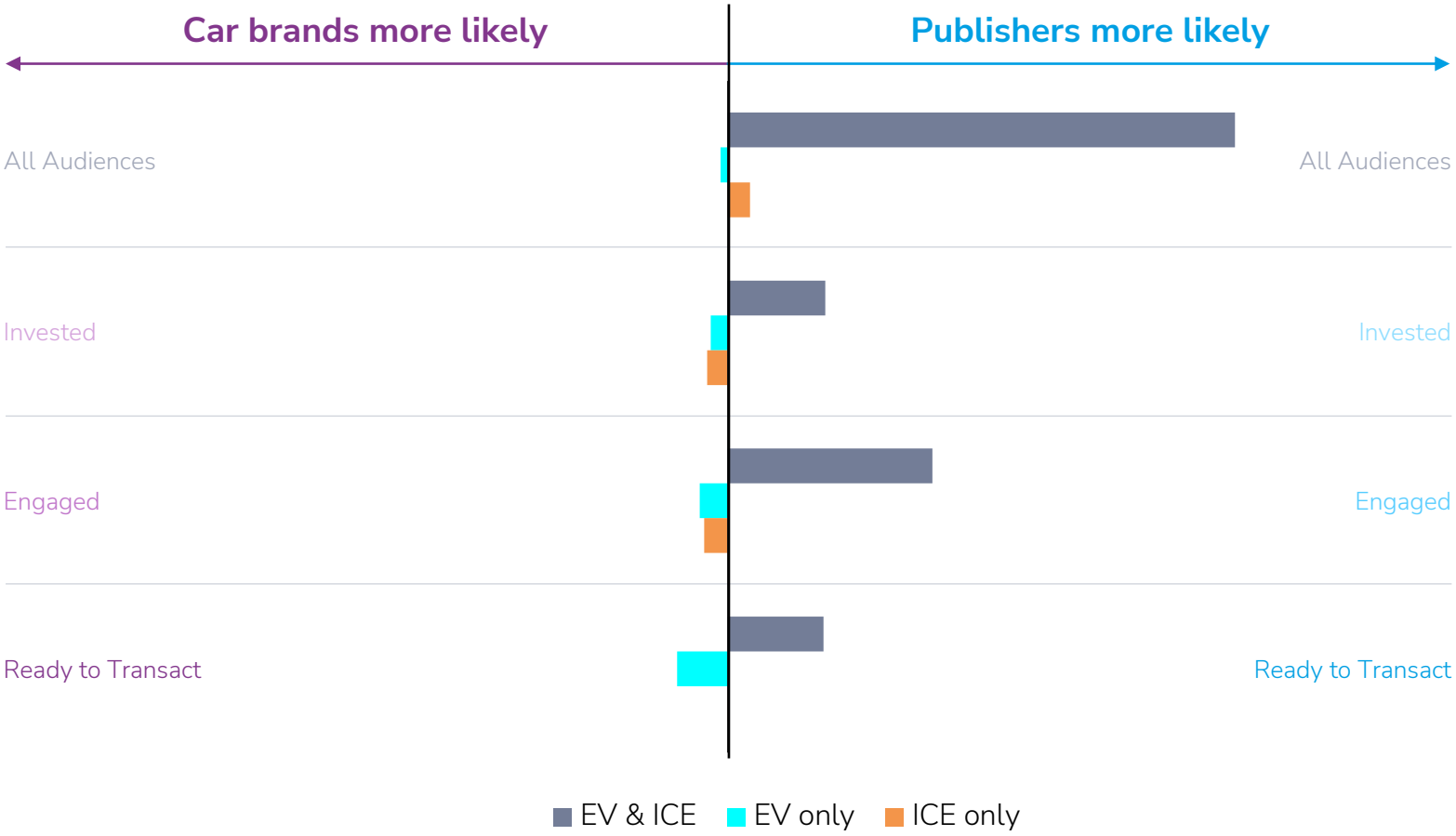
- Our analysis reveals that **25% of visits to car brand sites view EV content**
- However, EVs account for **only 15% of all registrations**
- EV intenders are **reaching later stages of purchase journey**, with many visiting the test drive section, **but then fail to convert to sale**
- How can car brands improve these ratios?

EV shoppers engage more, particularly with ecommerce



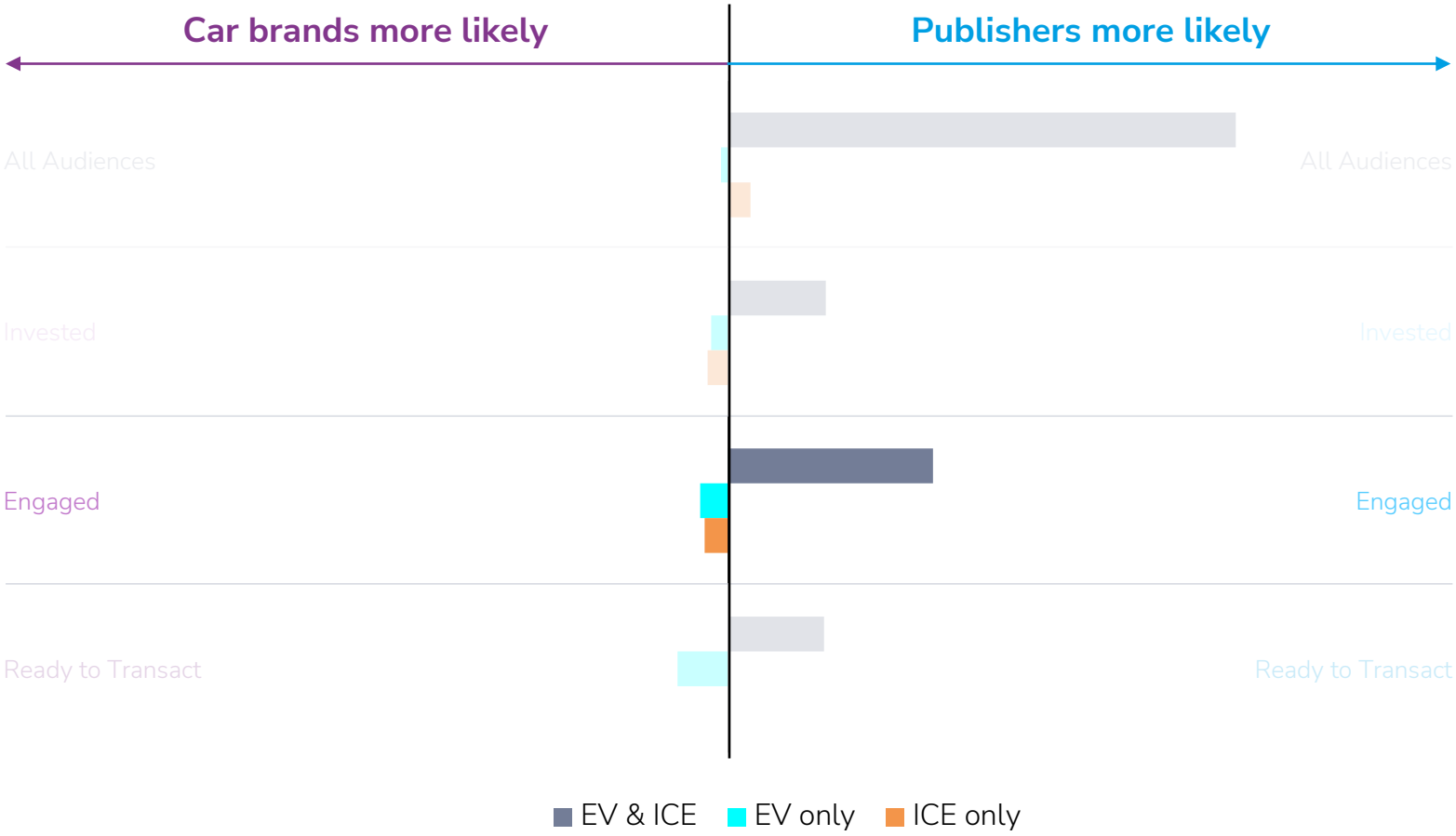
- **EV shoppers continue to spend more time** on research than non-EV shopper, although difference between them is narrowing
- EV shoppers are **14% more engaged on Premium Publisher sites** than car brand sites
- Those viewing ecommerce pages and EV models spend **25% more time** than those viewing ecommerce and non-EV models and **600% more time** than the average EV visit
- Visits engaging with EV models are **1.8X more likely to convert to ecommerce** actions than visits engaging with non-EVs, consistent with their 'early adopter' profile. Given the challenge car brands face converting to ecommerce, this could be an **opportunity for to support ecommerce initiatives** with, for example, more transaction-based information on publisher sites.

EV or non-EV decision made on Premium Publisher sites, not car brand



- Premium Publishers **see far more visits** that include both EV and non-EV models
- By the time these shoppers reach the car brand, their behaviour suggests many **have already made their decision**
- **It reinforces the role Publishers play** in model and powertrain choice, but also raises questions about the role of the car brand site in the way customers make their choice..

EV or non-EV decision made on Premium Publisher sites, not car brand



- Premium Publishers see far more visits that include both EV and non-EV models
- By time these shoppers reach the car brand, their behaviour suggests many have already made their decision
- It reinforces the role Publishers play in model and powertrain choice.
- **Key opportunity for car brands to influence EV versus non-EV decision at Engaged stage, where publishers dominate.**

EV buyer

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1/ Decision on EV or non-EV is much more likely to be made on Premium Publisher site than car brand site

2/ Car brands should consider being visible at this point to help to influence decision of shoppers they would otherwise not see

3/ Higher engagement for EV content on Premium Publisher sites signals customer need for information before making a choice, although difference is narrowing over time

4/ EV buyers are more ecommerce ready

4/

Summary of key findings

Key findings

- Premium Publisher brands perform strongly in the car buying journey
- Premium Publishers are more likely to be speaking to relevant audiences
- Visits to Premium Publishers are more engaged
- Up to 500,000 In-Journey visitors per month visit Premium Publishers but not car brands
- Premium Publisher play important role at transition between Engaged and Ready to Transact
- Decision on EV or non-EV is much more likely to be made on Premium Publisher sites than car brand sites
- Higher engagement for EV content on Premium Publisher sites signals customer need for information before making a choice
- EV buyers more ecommerce ready.